

SOCIAL CAPITAL OF CLUSTERS IN THE FUNCTION OF RAISING COMPETITIVENESS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES

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Abstract: Social capital represents collective or individual value gained from connectedness in certain groups or networks. Cluster is a system of connected enterprises and institutions that provide synergetic effect with their actions. Accordingly, one of very popular ways of organizing and strengthening the role of small and medium-sized enterprises is their connecting into clusters and building competitive advantage on that basis. Nowadays numerous organisations are trying to change their relationship towards social capital and divert a significant portion of their activities towards its quality management. The aim of this paper is to perceive social processes in the Serbian clusters and point out how the access to a cluster means entering a specific network of relations that can contain rich social capital. In that sense, the significance of the recognition of social capital in the clusters by small and medium-sized enterprises will be highlighted, since the relations of formal and informal connections in the networks have a strategic value for the improvement of SMEs, that are otherwise unable to make faster economic progress due to limited resources.

Keywords: social capital, cluster, interorganizational connectedness, networks, norms, trust, competitiveness.

1. Introduction

One of more significant phenomena in relation to the issue of competitiveness, which has been the subject of recent studies, is social cap-

ital. The researchers in economic science use the concept of social capital to point to the social nature of economic processes, i.e. how social relations/ties affect economics participants and how the said

participants use social organization to fulfil their own interests. It is a fact that no one can exhibit the behaviour that is not in accordance with relevant environment and not taking into account of associating into a "community" as a social resource that brings benefits in the social sense, on all levels, because it increases the possibilities of individuals, groups and organizations to prosper and form mutually beneficial relationships. Having the best technology is not enough, there should be people able to use it, and the social capital says that neither technologies nor people are enough unless the relations among those people are quality. "Team building" being applied in the increasing number of organizations rests on that very concept. According to Fukuyama, a society based on preserved traditions successfully incorporating forms of contemporary social life in the widest sense, i.e. a society that has its own value basis of communion and its continuity will be "more capable of organizational innovation, since the high level of trust enables the existence of a large variety of life forms". [Fukuyama, 1997, 37] Therefore, it is necessary to search for modalities that could help the organizations not just to orient towards competitive market, but also to use the potential of social

capital as a way of achieving long-term sustainable competitiveness.

The aim of this paper is to point out to the influence of social capital, i.e. that segment of total capital whose source is in social ties and relations, reciprocity norms and trust on elevating the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (further: SMEs). More specifically, the stress is on the empirical research in contact with cluster managers, observing the current social processes in Serbian clusters and on offering respective recommendations for increasing competitiveness of SMEs.

The main hypothesis is that the potential of social capital is globally insufficiently used for development and increasing of competitiveness of SMEs in Serbian clusters. In such circumstances in Serbia, unlike in other transitional countries, there has been no visible improvement of competitiveness of these enterprises in clusters.

The paper is realized in accordance with techniques of methodology of scientific research work. Theoretical analysis of the research subject is supported by findings from international and domestic literature, i.e. the findings of the authors who, in their papers, analysed the issues that are the subject of research of this paper.

The results of this work should contribute to a more objective perception and better understanding of the connection between social capital and the competitiveness of SMEs within clusters, and also point out that for improving competitiveness within clusters it is important to build trust, commitment to social ties, reciprocity norms and the possibility for people to use their resources for each other.

2. Research methodology

Research methodology in this paper is based on theoretical work of numerous authors. This is why in the beginning a review of literature on research on social capital was given, in order to set the theoretical basis for analysing social processes in clusters and thus, using deductive approach, open up a way for further research. Further, having in mind that one of very popular ways of organizing and strengthening the roles of SMEs is their connecting into clusters, the continuation of the paper points out the advantages of building competitive advantage on that basis, especially those advantages of social character that are seen in the nature of ties and relationships being formed among cluster members. In the next part, an analysis of social processes in Serbian clusters was done using empirical research and the

results of the said research were discussed. Concluding remarks end the paper.

3. Literature review

3.1. The notion of social capital, main components and role

The concept of social capital became popular in late 90s of the 20th century, when the World Bank dedicated a research program to it (1998), and it received public affirmation in 2000. In fact, the moment that the fact of social connectedness among people was adjoined by value connotation, this phenomenon enters the focus of scientific research. There are numerous definitions and explanations of the term "social capital". Without going into which definition is the best and most complete, as that would entail long and serious considerations followed by complex comparative studies of selected literature, we have chosen the definition given by Harvard professor Robert Putnam, which is most accepted and widely spread and which defines social capital as "characteristics of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the work of organization of a society through realization (support or facilitating) of coordinated arrangements". [Putnam et al., 1993, 167] As the suggested definition shows, social

capital consists of three dimensions, stemming from and facilitating daily cooperation, and it is a common resource, i.e. common good. Social capital helps people place their financial, physical and human capitals in the function of improving common good, and as such, it is partially a prerequisite of development. What may be most important when it comes to social capital is certainly its indestructibility. Sharing of social capital does not diminish it, but rather the possibility of its expansion is ever present. Social capital always comes first, it is the ownership of all actors within a social network, so that no individual has exclusive ownership. Contemporary economies create competitive advantages through the accumulation of social capital.

The central idea of social capital is that the social networks, i.e. relationships among people have value that does not consist only of warm emotions, but of very specific benefits that are the result of trust, reciprocity, information exchange and cooperation of those connected via social networks. The literature on the role of social networks specifically emphasises their importance for social management. Putman (1993) points out that efficient social management leans on the tradition of civil engagement and the structure of civil networks.

Barr [1998], having analysed the connection between the structure of business networks and performance of enterprises in Africa [mentioned by Golubović, 2007], established that the entrepreneurs in small local enterprises in traditional industries form so-called "solidarity networks" that provide information on the behaviour and intentions of their members, with the main aim of reducing differences and uncertainties. On the other hand, bigger regional enterprises merge into so called "innovation networks", exchanging knowledge on technologies and global markets, with the explicit aim of increasing enterprises' productivity, profit and market share. When it comes to individuals, belonging to a network provides certain benefits, such as support when necessary, better access to information (smaller costs of accessing it), and a larger number of alternatives to choose from. Burdie [1999] believes that the amount of social capital an actor possesses depends on the scope of the network they can successfully mobilize, as well as on the size of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) owned by each person they have a (coalition) relationship with.

Apart from social ties, special importance is given to social norms as generally accepted informal social rules and conventions that deter-

mine, forbid and adjust behaviour of individuals in various social circumstances. Putnam [1993] emphasises that the norms and network integration stemming from the personal associations enable the participants to accomplish mutual goals more effectively. Without social norms, it is nearly impossible to imagine the transactions among anonymous individuals. Should the importance of respecting norms within a society get weaker, the certainty of spreading opportunism increases, according to Elster [2007]. From the perspective of this paper, it is especially important to stress that social norms improve allocative efficiency from the social standpoint. This means that the total benefits a society accomplishes based on cooperative behaviour surpass by far total costs that the adherence to these norms poses for individuals. By respecting socially accepted values, actors provide security and other benefits, while avoiding costs. Thus entire society benefits, because costs caused by opportunistic behaviour lessen. Further, an important determinant of social norms is the reciprocity principle that "enables the permanence of cooperative relations", mutually binding participants of the said relations. At the same time, having in mind the density of ties of mutual interactions, the institution of reciprocity

very frequently represents the source of self-organizing. Trust and reciprocity also have a stimulating effect on the solidarity of participants in social and business relations

Trust and social capital have a strong interconnectedness. [Adler, 2001] The element of trust in social capital might be the best illustration of its importance for economic development. Societies that are characterized by a higher level of trust are less dependent on formal institutions in the providing of contract fulfilment. Interpersonal trust represents a substitute for state protection of property rights and contracts. From the perspective of our work, what should be stressed is that the existence of trust within a cluster primarily entails the existence of the atmosphere of openness and honesty among cluster members, the cooperation with other members based on partner basis, and that the exchange of information among cluster members surpasses the level presupposed by cooperation agreement. In the economic exchange, in the majority of cases, the activities are repetitive, and the rational participants accumulate trust with which they build successful cooperation based on mutual interest, thereby decreasing costs and increasing benefits. At the same time, in societies with

higher levels of trust, economic actors have conditions for reaching decisions on investments and the choice of technologies that are optimal in the long term. In such societies, not only the incentives for innovation and physical capital accumulation are stronger, but also yields of human capital are greater. [Golubović, 2007]

3.2. Cluster connecting - assumption of strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs

Clusters encompass the groups of connected sectors and other entities that are of significance for competitiveness. Considering that, according to Porter, competitive advantages inside national rhombus can be better developed inside clusters, rather than within scattered enterprises inside one national economy - it is clear that both enterprise competitiveness and national competitiveness could be successfully created and developed through the cluster concept.

The advantages of clusters for strengthening the competitiveness SMEs and regional development are numerous [Kraus et al., 2021] and one of the basic ones is contained in the fact that the clusters enable economies of scale, because they are most frequently formed within a specific branch, of similar value chain, are of similar structure and often follow similar strate-

gies. Moreover, the advantages of joining of enterprises into clusters are also seen in facilitated access to the latest knowledge, [Aslesen et al., 2019] stimulation of knowledge exchange, cutting of costs, creation of the possibility for cooperation, support for innovation and incentive for competitiveness, [Scott et al., 2016] and creation of critical mass necessary for further growth.

Thanks to these advantages that are primarily manifested in cooperation, mutual connectedness, and information, knowledge, and experience exchange, SMEs that are cluster members can achieve better results than those who are not. It goes without saying that SMEs connected into clusters achieve: costs reductions (e.g. through common marketing, quality and management control introduction, branding etc.), higher work productivity, faster responses to market demands, further education of the workers, etc. The role of universities and research centres in educating necessary personnel and support to innovation is especially important. Moreover, SME cluster membership is considered to contribute to motivation growth.

Comparative advantage of the enterprises grouped in clusters is based on their specialization, cooperation, higher flexibility and diversification. Specialization is im-

portant for the success of clusters, where they have directed their resources. Mutual cooperation enables the enterprises to compensate for their weaknesses, but also helps them to be flexible, with the aim of quick response to the signals from the market. Various groups of manufacturers and suppliers within a given area, i.e. region, complement each other, performing specialized duties within clusters, which contributes to their diversification.

Specialized companies usually have no trouble with quality control, as they perform one thing only, but that is why they have to perform it really well. Cluster development is followed by the increase of specialized technical and market ability of local human resources. Local workers, technicians, managers and consultants often move from one enterprise to the next and thus the advantage of specialization belongs to the local system, rather than one enterprise only.

At the time of uncertainty and turbulent environment, which imposes constant innovation activity as the prerequisite for existence, the highest chance of survival belongs to those enterprises gathered in clusters. By introducing innovation, creating new products and services with the aid of modern technology, clusters affect not only the establishment of competitive advantages

of the enterprises, but also competitiveness of the entire region, and thus national economy.

New economic currents have influenced clusters in such a way that they move their business activities into places that provide them with best business environments for their specific activities. The more globalized a market is, the bigger the possibilities for the resources to go to more attractive regions, increasing the role of clusters and leading regional specificities. Thanks to these processes, clusters (and SMEs within them) have the tendency to increase specialization and connectedness with other clusters, i.e. SMEs with the aim of providing complementary activities.

One of the key factors for successful operating of clusters is the production of products that must be synchronized with all cluster members. According to the very structure of a cluster, it contains various kinds of enterprises, because it encompassed the entire production process. That is why the standardization of the entire system of management becomes a necessity. SMEs can have large benefits from using standards - they can use the existing standards during the development of new products in order to improve their innovative abilities; they can use the directives of good practices in order to increase

efficiency and improve performances; they can help the development of technologies and promote successful commercialization of new products; they can attract new customers as well as keep the existing ones by improving the quality of the products.

In the end, let us emphasise the one thing everyone agrees on - for the SMEs to be competitive, they have to identify competitive advantages that a cluster can have, as well as to know how those advantages can be improved or enlarged. The analysis of market potentials demands a careful assessment of competitors' products and markets, especially their growth potentials and market strength. The failure in the analysis can have as a consequence the loss of the competitive position, which brings to performance below possibilities for the cluster that wants to compete in the global market.

3.3. Social capital of clusters in the function of improving the competitiveness of SMEs

An important benefit of cluster joining is social in character, visible in the nature of ties and relationships forming among cluster members. The relations of formal and informal ties in the networks have strategic importance for the improvement of performances of

SMEs, which are not able to make faster market progress without these networks. Joining a cluster for an SME can represent a source of information - network of communication channels, source of knowledge - network of experts, channel of access to important individuals and institutions - network of acquaintances and/or business friends. Moreover, social capital improves timing, relevance and quality of information. [Adler & Kwon, 2002] For example, the entrepreneurs with the access to university professors can find out about new technologies before others. Thus they can react before it becomes common knowledge. When a small enterprise enters the network, it obtains the advantages of scale economy, keeping the flexibility at the same time. Such a cooperation is a fundamental driver of development of an SME. The influence of social capital on the creativity/innovation of SME can be measured through various aspects: cooperative behaviour of the enterprise, main information sources for innovation, width of cooperation with competitors and universities, level of trust towards other people, including the importance of informal networks. Also, the strengthening of teamwork, collective roles and responsibilities between members and leaders, as well as the collective challenge of networked

enterprises and institutions related to the criteria of performance development of selected products of common interest, by project plan and specifications of the product, shortening of overall costs through common laboratories, higher financial means, human and scientific basis and other means, SMEs can improve their competitive position.

Further, interorganizational relations in the business network function not only as a platform for mutual action, but also as a simulator and facilitator of the process of internationalization. SMEs thus get involved into the wider content of connected network where strategic activities of enterprises initiate changes in the structure of the network, and then the activity of members can influence each enterprise within the network, depending on the strategic action in question. The configuration of a business network is dynamic, the relationships grow, develop or remain in the passive stage and are determined according to their purpose *"raison d'être"*. [Vučić et al., 2009] Close associate relationships with certain suppliers, buyers and sales intermediaries with added value strengthen the progress of the SMEs, in the sense that the strategically important relationships with suppliers and buyers as well as sales networks form the most influential relations. More-

over, when SMEs work together, they accumulate knowledge that constitutes a more efficient strategy of competitiveness.

Apart from social ties, special importance for SMEs is given to social norms as generally accepted informal social rules and conventions that determine, forbid and adjust behaviour of individuals in various social circumstances. Social norms improve allocative efficiency from the social standpoint: total benefits a society accomplishes based on cooperative behaviour surpass by far total costs that the adherence to these norms poses for individuals. By respecting socially accepted values, SMEs provide security and other benefits, while avoiding costs. Thus entire society benefits, because costs caused by opportunistic behaviour lessen. An important determinant of social norms is the reciprocity principle that "enables the permanence of cooperative relations", mutually binding participants of the said relations. Relation trust is based on the permanent reciprocity of trust - *I will do something for you, and you will do something for me*. [Adler & Kwon, 2002] At the same time, entailing a dense network of social interactions, the institution of reciprocity can very often represent an instrument of self-organizing. Also, from the aspect of SMEs, the development of generalized reciprocity spurs the

origin of various forms of collective self-crediting and financial aids. On the other hand, limited solidarity is tightly connected with trust and reciprocity and the network of participants connected with the institution of limited solidarity is as a rule marked by reciprocal relations. In an environment where the majority does not respect the reciprocity norm (mutual relationship of returning the services), trust and cooperation among those who are not acquainted well carries too much risk and fraud.

The existence of trust inside a cluster primarily entails the atmosphere of openness and honesty among members, and that the cooperation with other members is based on partner basis. At the same time, the high level of social capital inside a cluster encourages entrepreneurs and managers to rather rely on trust than on a detailed agreement, which affects the development of SMEs favourably. The existence of trust in interorganizational relations contributes to the reduction of transaction costs and better coordination, which through the exchange of information and joint problem solving leads to time savings and increased efficiency. [Gulati & Nickerson, 2008] Thus, trust reduces complexity and uncertainty.

4. Empirical analysis

In this part of the paper we will present the extract from the empirical research of Serbian clusters. More specifically, our attention is directed towards the analysis of social aspects of increasing competitiveness of SMEs within clusters. The research encompassed the sample of 10 clusters and SMEs that make them up. The respondents are cluster managers. Valuing the importance of information obtained in immediate contacts, the survey was conducted using the interview method, by telephone. The research was conducted between 11th and 28th January 2020.

The first phase of the research was the preparation of the survey. The second step was the identification of the sample of 10 clusters. The sample was made according to the list of clusters published in the study: *"Clusters ten years later: Analysis of the effect of the program of cluster development support in Serbia 2007-2015"* published by InTER, Belgrade. It was checked whether the chosen clusters were all active, and the final list of 10 clusters was formed. (*Construction cluster Dunder, Association of textile workers "LZOTEKS", Cluster of metal industry of Western Serbia "West metal group", Regional fruit cluster of South Serbia, Cheese cluster*

South, Serbian furniture cluster, Tourist cluster of radan area, Association - recycling cluster South, Car cluster of Serbia, Niš cluster of advanced technologies-NICAT). All of these clusters were included in the analysis, i.e. survey through the interview method.

In accordance with the aim of our research, we singled out the question from the survey *"To what extent do SMEs share knowledge with other cluster members?"* To this question, the largest number of cluster managers (50%) responded that SMEs share their knowledge with other members, but not to a great extent, 20% cluster managers responded that SMEs share knowledge with other cluster members to a large extent, while 30% of managers responded that SMEs do not share their knowledge with other cluster members at all.

For the needs of the analysis the following question was asked: *"To what extent are generally accepted informal social rules and conventions inside the cluster respected by SMEs?"* To this question 60% of cluster managers responded that SMEs respect informal social rules and conventions inside the cluster enough, while 40% of cluster managers responded that SMEs insufficiently respect informal social rules and conventions inside the cluster.

"How developed is the trust between SMEs and other cluster members?" was also one of the survey questions. To this question, 50% of cluster managers responded that the level of trust between SMEs and other cluster members is sufficient, i.e. graded the trust level with 2 (two), 30% of cluster managers responded that the level of trust between SMEs and other cluster members is medium, i.e. graded the level of trust with 3 (three), while 20% of cluster managers responded that the level of trust between SMEs and other cluster members is high, grading the trust with the grade 5 (five).

We also wanted to examine the following: *"How developed is the trust between SMEs and state officials, i.e. local self-government?"* To this question, 50% of cluster managers responded that the level of trust between SMEs and state officials, i.e. local self-government is insufficient, i.e. graded the trust level with 1 (one), 30% of cluster managers responded that the level of trust between SMEs and state officials, i.e. local self-government is medium, i.e. graded the level of trust with 3 (three), while 20% of cluster managers responded that the level of trust between SMEs and state officials, i.e. local self-government is high, grading the trust with the grade 5 (five).

In the end, we have singled out the question: *"Is there cooperation of SMEs with similar SMEs in clusters at the state level, i.e. at inter-regional level (cross-border cooperation)?"* To this question, 50% of managers responded that there had been initiatives for cooperation with similar SMEs in clusters at the state level, i.e. inter-regional level, while 50% of managers responded that such cooperation is non-existent.

4.1. Results discussion

Social capital potential in Serbian clusters was not sufficiently recognized by SMEs as their members. Mostly the largest number of SMEs share their knowledge with other cluster members, but not to a large extent, which implies that SMEs still preserve a certain level of knowledge inside their own enterprises. Among the examples of clusters wherein SMEs share information and knowledge is "Regional fruit cluster of South Serbia", which was the main activity bearer for preparing SMEs and other cluster members for the adoption of seven principles of HACCP system. The cluster was the main source of information, but also support network for SMEs and other members who also made certain suggestions about its implementation, as was later partly adopted by the lawmakers. SMEs mostly see them-

selves in clusters as equal partners, so when the situation requires it, there is knowledge exchange and interorganizational learning, rather than simple transfer of some explicit knowledge from one enterprise to the other. Clusters lack institutional network core that would represent strategic expert support to SMEs and other members. For some SMEs interorganizational network, also, did not take over the role of a proper channel for reaching important business partners. Less developed aspects of inter-organisational cooperation are seen in the area of common market conquest and the improvement of technical-technological potential through cluster. SMEs that wanted to, and succeeded to improve their market position through joining are of modest scale. SMEs often prefer independent market exit and use their already established connections/contacts with buyers. One SME manager states that it has never happened that a meeting was attended by both enterprises (competitors). Somehow, they find out that the other enterprise intends to come and based on that decide not to attend the meeting. There are cases where more advanced inter-organizational relations appear in clusters that function, not as a unique network, but a series of smaller networks within a flexible network of a unique character, that

are formed between SMEs and other members depending on the needs of a specific business.

The research has shown that inside clusters belonging to higher developing phases there is a clearer structuring of interorganizational relations in the social sense and the separation of more dominant enterprises. Those enterprises then hold a central position in the interorganizational network exactly based on their ability to contribute to key competitive advantages and critical factors of the business success of the cluster. Mostly, the dominant position of an SME in the cluster is determined by the strength of the enterprise in the business of knowledge and high technologies, as well as financial strength of the enterprise in the cluster - with real output or tangible services.

It is an undisputable fact that informal norms can often function as an addition to the legal norms, or even their replacement. However, as this research has shown, a little over than half of cluster managers responded that SMEs respect informal social rules and conventions inside the cluster. The existence of trust inside a cluster primarily entails that among the cluster members there is an atmosphere of openness and honesty, that the cooperation with other members is based on partner base

and that the information exchange among cluster members surpasses the level assumed by the cooperation agreement. However, trust is one of the characteristics of SMEs that is most difficult to develop and that needs most work. The reason for this is that there are prominent conflicts among various groups, underdeveloped business culture, i.e. insufficient trust that enterprises show towards this form of interorganizational joining and the benefit it might have for their business. Some SMEs show mistrust towards the position of the cluster manager and the role this position has in directing and helping enterprises develop through a cluster. There is also mistrust towards external stakeholders, where enterprises express their fear of joining and commitment that would destroy their autonomy and self-sufficiency in the measure they are not comfortable with, as well as fear of financial expenditures that would finance business/projects, where they cannot see clear, unequivocal connection to improving their business. While describing a situation of organizing a study visit to leading fruit plantations and agricultural clusters in the region, as well as organizing an info-day and education with the topics relevant for fruit producers, one cluster manager states the following: it was extremely difficult just

to convince certain SMEs just to leave their daily business for two days only in order to attend the lectures and education.

In the end, in the evaluation, everyone wrote that they would like for this event to repeat, which seemed almost unbelievable having in mind the initial resistance and their mistrust in the expediency of the event. The problem of vanity of some producers is also present. There is not enough trust between producers and suppliers, as well as between market actors and the state, i.e. its institutions. The research also shows that the trust between SMEs and state officials is also insufficiently developed, especially towards regional development agencies, local self-governments/cities, chambers of commerce, government agencies, financial institutions/funds etc. Although there have been attempts to achieve better cooperation with similar SMEs in clusters at state level, i.e. inter-regional level, in numerous cases that cooperation was mostly declarative.

5. Conclusion

The way in which SMEs manage their social capital, i.e. their communication networks, networks of knowledge and experts, as well as networks of business friends that enable them to access financial and

human capital can influence to a large extent the creation and management of their competitive advantage. Networks bring benefit, in a unifying social sense, on all levels and increase the possibilities of individuals and groups to create and form mutually beneficial relations, which directly aids their efficiency, effectiveness and their differentiation in a competitive market environment. All economic partnerships nowadays demand a certain set of common values in order to build trust, commitment to social ties, reciprocity norms and the possibility for people to use their resources for each other. SMEs can achieve much more if they work together, as a group of mutually connected enterprises, suppliers, service providers, and organisations important for their business, within clusters.

For young SMEs in clusters, lacking reputation, and with limited resources and difficulties in facing the ever-changing environment, the importance of cluster networks is even greater, because by using established partnerships they can gain reputation, achieve resources and professional expertise. Thanks to clusters, many European regions have developed competitive advantage in specialized areas.

When it comes to Serbia, clusters as a form of interorganizational

connecting are still well below expectations. Numerous practical problems, issues and questions are present, which need to be addressed on the fly, in order for clusters, and SMEs within them, to achieve expected effects. Specifically, the results of survey of SMEs in clusters confirm that the majority of necessary prerequisites for the development of SMEs in clusters is lacking or is just beginning to develop. The state, working in general interest, can create a basis for strengthening the trust and inclusion of individuals into society, which can also strengthen social capital. It is a fact that in the post-industrial era the success of organizations is hidden in social

capital; however, it is hard to quantify and include it in the existing financial indicators. That is why, apart from recognizing the potential and providing quality social capital, its measurement and quantification is especially important, because the biggest difficulty in understanding the role of social capital in economic processes is the lack of quantitative indicators, the measure of "social input and output". Further efforts in this area need to be directed towards achieving balance between rational, precise and measurable indicators on the one hand, and qualitative, intangible effects that are important for achieving competitive advantage on the other hand.

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SOCIJALNI KAPITAL KLASTERA U FUNKCIJI PODIZANJA KONKURENTNOSTI MALIH I SREDNJIH PREDUZEĆA

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Rezime: Socijalni kapital predstavlja kolektivnu ili individualnu vrednost dobijenu iz povezanosti u određenim grupama ili mrežama. Klasteri su sistem povezanih preduzeća i institucija koje zajedničkim delovanjem obezbeđuju sinergetski efekat. Shodno tome, jedan od vrlo popularnih načina organizovanja i jačanja uloge malih i srednjih preduzeća jeste njihovo povezivanje u klasterne i građenje konkurentske prednosti ekonomije na toj osnovi. Danas brojne organizacije sve izraženije nastoje da izmene svoj odnos prema socijalnom kapitalu i usmere značajan deo aktivnosti prema njegovom kvalitetnom upravljanju. Cilj ovog rada je da se sagledaju socijalni procesi u klasterima Srbije i ukaže kako pristupanje klasteru znači ulazak u specifičnu mrežu odnosa koja u sebi može da krije bogat socijalni kapital. U tom smislu, biće ukazano na značaj prepoznavanja socijalnog kapitala u klasterima od strane malih i srednjih preduzeća s obzirom da odnosi neformalnih i formalnih veza u mrežama imaju stratešku važnost za unapređenje performansi MSP, koje zbog ograničenih resursa nisu u mogućnosti da bez ovih mreža brže tržišno napreduju.

Ključne reči: socijalni kapital, klaster, interorganizaciono povezivanje, mreže, norme, poverenje, konkurentnost.